



David Liddle – Podcast 69

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SPEAKERS

Nadine Powrie, David Liddle

Nadine Powrie 00:01

Welcome to the #Leadingthecoachingchange podcast where my mission is to help you master difficult work conversations so that you become a confident and courageous communicator in the workplace. Leading the coaching change is here to show you how you can use your talents in the best way and finding your unique communication strengths. Let's start having more courageous conversations today. But before I move on to welcome my guest today, David Liddle, I just wanted to speak about my online license training. And today, I'm not going to be mentioning the description, I'm not going to describe what it is, but I just want to share with you a discovery call that I had with a potential client at the time who by then, after the call became a client. And I just wanted to share with you what a discovery call looks like when we are talking about my online license training program on managing difficult conversations. So these potential clients at the time, emailed me so actually didn't use Calendly, emailed me and he requested a discovery call with me, he said that he could probably last longer than 45 minutes because he had a lot of questions to ask me. So we set up the call, I think it was two weeks later, we had that call. And what I did is I organized a virtual tour of my online license training program. So there are 17 modules. So what we did is we navigated virtually what those modules look like. So looking at the lessons, and looking at the resources, so the video files, which are captioned and the audio files, he made the point actually that he was very impressed that they were transcribed that they were captioned, we had a look at the infographic templates. And the feedback that I got from this potential client was that he was very keen to see that it was high quality. But remember, you know, I'm a teacher, I've always worked with designing resources online. So that is not new for me. So it was very keen to see the high quality of the resources. And he was also very interested to hear the approach that I took about the modules because I didn't talk about generic skills only. I designed each module on specific topics that are linked to managing



difficult conversations. So, for example, we looked at module six, which is how to resolve personality conflict. And we looked at module nine, which is about how to influence your leadership style, particularly when you are looking at conflict resolution and conflict management. And we looked at accelerating management skills for new managers who very frequently do not know how to resolve conflict because they've not had any training. So that particular module 17, was beneficial for that specific organization. Then we talked about the number of people who are going to be joining the program. And, of course, each module for each module, I allocate ten people, because we have a hot seat every month, meaning that we meet, we meet up on Zoom monthly. And by having ten people, this means that we can respond to queries, we can do role plays, we can exchange what has gone well, and we can collaborate on constructing a conversation around conflict management and conflict resolution, we can share ideas. And so we talked about all of that. And at the end of the conversation, that particular person was very pleased I had on so all the questions, he then went away and to discuss this proposal with his colleagues. And I followed that up with a business proposal, and it was signed up, and I think it took about four weeks for the process to go through this process. So what I'm saying is if you want to have a virtual tour of the online license training program, then please do contact me send me an email at npowrie@nadinepowrie.com. So welcome to today's episode, where my guest is David Liddle. I am thrilled to have you, David.

David Liddle 05:02

Good morning to you. And I'm pleased to be here. Thanks for asking me.

Nadine Powrie 05:06

Well, thanks for accepting because actually, we don't know, we don't know each other as we've never met in real, you know, face to face.

David Liddle 05:14

No, this feels like the new normal in practice. I feel like we've got to know each other over the last couple of weeks. I know. Thank you again.

Nadine Powrie 05:23

So David, you You're the founder and CEO of the TCM group, and TCM stands for total conflict management.

David Liddle 05:32

Yeah. Absolutely. Which is a real mouthful, Nadine, but it's, so we talk about Teach Consult Mediators.

Nadine Powrie 05:39

OK. OK. Well, you can talk to me about that later on in our conversation. You're an expert in conflict management, mediation, employee relations and leadership, best practice. And you and I, we've got something in common, because I always look for a common point when I



interview my guest and, and we both like trademarks. So you've trademarked several processes or framework of methods like do Resolution Policy. I wished I had that when I was a headteacher, I have to say, and the Fair Model, the Insight Change Model and the something called Apaxio, and I have read on your LinkedIn profile that you tell people that you have a mediator, through and through. So I want to get to the nitty-gritty of what that means. OK. So, David, what else would you like to share with us about yourself?

David Liddle 06:38

Well, Nadine, you've managed to get some great insights into me and my character, so thank you very, very much. So I'm a father of three beautiful children. I live just outside Cambridge. I lived in London for 15 years and then have my family we moved out. So my kids are all 11, nine and five. So I have a handful there. We live out in the countryside. Yeah, and that takes up a lot of my time. And I do a bit of volunteering work as well. And yeah, that's, that's me.

Nadine Powrie 07:11

And you cycle as well. I saw that.

David Liddle 07:13

gosh, I love cycling as well. I'm a bit of a fair-weather cyclist, Nadine. So when the sun's shining, and it's not too windy, I'll jump out on the bike. But no, I do enjoy cycling. And I try to keep fit as well well.

Nadine Powrie 07:25

OK. OK. So So I guess my first question to you is, you know, you you're an accredited mediator, you're very well known and respected in the world of mediation. What aspect of mediation are you most dealing with at the moment?

David Liddle 07:42

Yeah, it was mediating yesterday for an international organization at board level. And it was relatively quite timely the question because some of the challenges that they were facing, it was within two to two senior directors. And we really, it was, it was about the roles and the communication and this kind of classic personality clash that we saw between these two senior directors, and certainly in the COVID situation, and the new normal and this style of communicator, what was evident in that particular case was the amount of subtle and nuanced feedback that you would usually be given to each other in an everyday relationship wasn't happening. And many of our roles are quite formative. We develop our parts, not by our job descriptions, or our role profiles, nor even, indeed, by our objectives and our KPIs. But we've developed them in an intuitive and formative way on a day to day basis through our interactions. I've noticed a lot over the recent months, because of those lack of businesses, that many of the roles and the and the development of those roles and the understanding and clarity of both the roles and the interaction between roles are becoming damaged as dissonance, and that dissonance and lack of clarity as well known as a



significant antecedent of conflict, it leads to confusion, a feeling of, in this particular case, a sense of isolation and feeling of being undermined. So it's straightforward to codify it as a personality clash, I often think times, I presented that or performance issue or, or breakdown and communication. But I guess when I was mediating yesterday, it was really about how the two individuals managed and developed and maintained a level of resilience in their relationship so they could continue this formative development of an understanding of their roles and how they interacted with each other. And that was a fascinating case. So that's one that I was working on yesterday, which is right at the front of my mind, and I love mediating if I'm not mediating, I have withdrawal symptoms. I think another one is about how we give and receive feedback and those mechanisms in performance management before COVID and certainly through COVID has become a very significant issue, you know, organizations are transforming from notions of feedback to feedforward, that regular and routine level of feedback. But that hasn't always cascaded through different management levels. And so organizations are seeking to create environments whereby we're giving that feedforward and looking ahead and developing frameworks to drive success that servant leadership model, you understand the needs of individuals and work towards meeting their needs, and aligning needs to the organization strategy. But I think most people's experience of performance management is it can feel it's very much a backwards-looking exercise or once a year exercise; it can feel quite daunting until we see a tremendous amount of work coming through to do about performance and the management of performance and all of the relationship breakdowns and challenges that go with that. In itself, the communication breakdown and perceptions of intentional harm being created by the other side aren't the two that stand out. For me, I think that for formative nature of role development and interactivity between team members and managers and others, and the ability to give and receive feedback in a meaningful and supportive way and performance.

Nadine Powrie 11:18

Did you see that? Because of the situation in which we are, you know, communication is very, very different. And we've not had any training to communicate, under COVID. We've not been exposed to that before. And does it show actually, that we were communicating before in a specific way that isn't appropriate anymore? Because were on zoom, Teams and, and perhaps, you know, in our communication, we're not accurate. We're not specific, do you find that we have to relearn how to communicate to be more effective as a leader.

David Liddle 11:59

That's a great observation. I think we do have to relearn because one of the beauties of mediation is it's an opportunity for insight growth and learning. So the mediation process enables us to do that. I think what seems fantastic. I think if we only imagined if we'd have had the pandemics five years ago, when we were working on a sort of very early versions of Skype, and the challenges that went with it, you know, they'd been would have been awful. Video technology has saved the day. But you're like we're learning. It's a new tool. And what I'm finding is it becomes quite businesslike. And as a mediator, I know that it's not necessarily the conversation that happens under a fixed schedule. It's the stuff that happens



outside of the agenda. So if I look at the transaction, I can draw on transaction analysis, and that's OK, you know, I'm OK, you're OK. So this is interesting, because we don't generally in a meeting, get the OK, check which box we're in and make sure all yeah, I'm OK. You're OK. But, but we kind of do it instinctively through the small talk in the chat that we have those little moments of conversation that we have during the meeting at the coffee break. And then at the end of the session. And what I found was zoom calls, and another technology is that it becomes quite businesslike, we have a plan, we deliver against that agenda. And then the meeting concludes, and then we got another Zoom call. And we're not taking those moments to stop to check-in and to check myself am I feeling as well? And how are you feeling? So again, I can draw on the mediation I was doing yesterday, because it's so so contemporaneous is what I was helping those interested in doing it themselves, is recognizing that that check-in and the opportunity to see how you're doing as another human being is a crucial stage in the development of good rapport and understanding. So, of course, we're all learning what mediation is doing is helping people to learn a moment when they're experiencing distress in a relationship.

Nadine Powrie 13:58

It's a little more challenging to pick up on nonverbal communication when you see just people's face as opposed to seeing the whole body, isn't it?

David Liddle 14:07

It's, it's hard enough as it is, you know, we might we get it so wrong, you know, it's, it's hard enough it is, but you know, yeah, I've got a cup of coffee here. You see, we had a friendly little chat before the podcast, we got to know each other a little bit. And so it sounds nice, but there's a lot that's positive about this, and I don't want to be too negative about it. As I said, it's safe for many of us; it's allowing organizations to function. Now when my kids were off school during the lockdown, my daughter would run in and then my sons would run in, you know, you got to see other people's kids and their god and family, and that was it was you got real insights into what you just did in office. I think there are real benefits, but your point is well made about not necessarily engaging with the whole person as you would do because of that ability to connect through the body language or through that sort of format. And developmental stuff that we do but then we don't know. It's called small talk. Yes, what are we, what's come to light to me is that chitter-chatter and that small talk and that rapport is key to how we develop and maintain strong relationships as human beings in almost all walks of our life.

Nadine Powrie 15:22

What do you find most rewarding as a mediator?

David Liddle 15:26

Wow, all of it. I love it. It's such an exciting process. You know, you start with these parties who are polarized and oppositional. You know, they couldn't imagine that their entrenched situation, which is probably the worst situation that's ever existed in the world ever, possibly



be resolved through a short conversation short, you know, the mediation conversation being relatively quick. But people can't imagine in their wildest dreams that this process is likely to, to move anything forward. So I enjoy seeing that. And I want this lovely stage in the mediation process, as I call it, the golden grump. I'll give it a go. Yeah, you know, they don't fly the flags. Because we've suddenly ridden into town, I don't want to see us, and I often think it's like going to the dentist, sticking sharp instruments into our mouth. So people don't want to go into mediation. It's not what they like to do. So though, they'll come into it reluctantly, but they show you real courage. So I love working up to helping the parties to, to, to show that courage and be willing to give it a go. And I enjoy helping them and get a lot of joy and pleasure from the opportunity to help the parties then begin to understand each other. So this divergence and this oppositional situation, which is expressed as their positions and their adopted positions, which can be both problematic and belligerent we start to pick beneath those, as you begin to understand a big fan of Marshall Rosenberg and nonviolent communication, what's going on for you. Underneath that, what what, what impact is this having? How do you feel? What do you need? What are your hopes, aspirations, your fears and concerns? And as we begin to express those to each other, and the partners that divergence becomes convergence, I believe, I, gosh, I don't think you need to feel respected. And I do too, and I don't think you need to feel valued. And I do too, and I can't believe that you need to be communicated within an open and honest way. And I do too, you know, they can't think that the other person has these human characteristics as they do. Because as you go through the mediation process and see this, these areas of convergence, it gives them the tools and the courage to deal with the areas of divergence and difference and they handle that differently, they see the variation in of disagreements and opportunity for innovation, for creativity, for growth. So suddenly, the conflict is transforming from dysfunctional in front of our eyes, from dysfunctional to functional, from destructive to constructive, you know, to a more cooperative approach, a more collective approach. And what I see happening is now the conflict is adding value to their lives, it's no longer detracting value or causing distress and harm. It's adding something meaningful and productive to their lives. It's helping them to gain insights and deliver better outcomes. The end of the process, which is just a day, only one day, they've created a framework and protocols and an understanding that they can begin to put into place from tomorrow onwards. I suppose the final, so that's an exhilarating and enriching experience. And the last thing I think is, you know, we know that three letters are not any mediation, of course, any, any mediation, BAU, business, as usual. The final stage of the mediation work, and, again, drawn on exposure. So it's how well you handle business as usual, and place, as usual, can be tense and challenging and stressful and difficult. What will you do differently, so not only they resolve in conflict, as it manifested, not only transformed the conflict, something which is useful. They've also built resilience, relational resilience, and personal resilience for how they deal with business as usual, from tomorrow onwards. Again, in the space of short space of time, it's got to be one of the most profoundly efficient and effective systems of justice that you could imagine and Hmm, yeah, so every stage of it I enjoy.

Nadine Powrie 19:36



Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I, I, I'm curious. When when I do mediation, about what I call the distance to travel. So you've got two individuals with a very different perspective on everything. And for me, I'm in the middle, and I'm like, OK, so that's the distance to travel between those two. And we have six hours or two days or whatever. And it's Making sure that at the end of the day, as you say, a solution has been found, so that both of them or if it's just two individuals, are in the right place. And I guess for me, it's also fine, you know, changing the behaviour so that it's sustained. Because I think it's easy to say it, you know, on a specific moment, it's easy to say, Yeah, OK, totally agree, we've got to an agreement here, I can change, and I get how you are, and so on. But it's about sustaining. You know, it's about making sure that when they go back to the office, a new crisis that they've never experienced, you know, throw them back to where they were at the beginning. So it's the iceberg, isn't it? It's kind of diving until you know, that you've explored everything that can challenge their behaviour, and that it's just saying, and it can sustain no matter what is thrown to them. Do you agree with me? Yeah,

David Liddle 21:04

Do you phrase that? Well, I think, you know, one of the things I say to the parties in any situation, whether I'm working with a group, department, individuals, or indeed some of the stuff around organizational dynamics that we're doing with organizations, conflict is a perfect thing. Conflict is not a problem. It's how we handle conflict. So what we're trying to do is remove conflict from these relationships. The best and most significant relationships operate in some form of tension. And as I said earlier, in my earlier answer about needing to continually check-in and, and recalibrate that, that interaction, but the best relationships operate in us in a level of tension. So when we go back to our substantive role, we're not trying to design that tension. I would argue, for mediator who is trying to create tension out of a relationship were impeding the ability for the organization to achieve competitive advantage through innovation and creativity. So what we need to be able to do and what the parties need to be able to do is ensure that when they are intended, they can handle that differently. And you talk about the behaviours and the behaviours for me come about because of the perceived intent of the other, do I see this as a risk or an attack or is this as an opportunity for growth? Yeah, but reframing our mindset from attacking, defend dynamic, which is the dynamic we see so much in our early stage of mediation towards a more of a greater level of insight, and a willingness and an openness to challenge and have honesty in that relationship and challenge with respect, to understand the meaning but to, in essence, not to immediately assume that the other person's behaviour is deliberately seeking to cause me harm. And as you'll know, from much much of our work as mediators, the parties jump to the conclusion that you've said that bad thing you must have intentionally sought to cause me harm. And that intuition that we have of deliberate and malignant intent on the part of the other triggers those responses those attack and defend those fight or flight responses. And that impedes the ability to have a constructive relationship. So part of the mediator's role is to remove the triggers, which trigger that cortisol response to fight or flight response. That then they can act, they can work and interact and react with each other differently, those



actions, interactions and reactions that they breathe out, and that will prevent those behaviours that will observe commodify because of that.

Nadine Powrie 23:29

I am I attended your webinar on positive psychology last week. And you talked about the difference of opinions. And I love that because I think that you know, the best teams have very different people with very different views, in my opinion, right? How do you manage the difference between the views?

David Liddle 23:52

I think the starting point is to celebrate those differences of opinions. I think diversity in divergent thinking or disruptive thinking is at the heart of the successful business is at the heart of the successful team. And I think organizations have become, so risk-averse, and so much focused on that disruptive or divergent thinking being a risk to the business that we've wrapped ourselves up in red tape and bureaucracy, complexity, and fear. And we're the captain of that difference. And then, of course, we started the organization trying to implement diversity and equality inclusion programs within this complex knot of fear and risk mitigation and risk aversion and risk management, and it gets in the way of managers and leaders leaders. So I think the starting point of managing difference of opinion, whether it's as a leader or a manager, a mediator or colleague, or whatever one's role might be is to celebrate that difference in that diversity of thinking. And then when from that starting point is to create psychologically safe and structured environments where people can communicate the difference of opinion, where it's conveyed in a way, which isn't seen as being undermining or belittling the other person where, you know, we might put 100 ideas out there. Only one succeeds, but we celebrate the one that succeeds. And we don't beat people up for the 99 that failed. And, you know, organizations need to readdress their attitude to failure. And, you know, think about how they create a space for people to fail and, and have those differences, how we celebrate the success and nurture an environment for people to be able to be successful and to create an environment whereby people can, can challenge each other and challenge the received wisdom, because when we challenge that received wisdom. It's the disruptive voices, and it's the divergent thought that is the heart of the future of a successful business, in my opinion, and mediation plays an essential part, but come on managers and leaders doing this as well. And of course, those that many of them do. And those are the successful managers and leaders that I think, are likely to try to drive the successful businesses of the future.

Nadine Powrie 26:09

I mean, I am very interested in disruptive leadership, I've done a few podcasts on that. Yeah. And we, one of them was with Simon Harmer, who is the director of a creative agency, we talked a lot about disruptive leadership. And I'm interested in disruptive leadership, with the difference of opinions, because you know, when you work in an organization, it's full of procedures, policies, you just name them, right, and you have to follow everything, as it says in the system. But actually, sometimes you know, in your heart that you can do better



than that, you can go off the policy, and you would get a better outcome. But you have to follow the procedure. And this is quite challenging when you want to be a disruptive leader because you think, yes, we've got the next stage, we can find something different, that's going to make a difference. But we're stuck because we've got the procedure and the policies. We can't, you know, we can't go anywhere, anywhere else, we have to follow those policies, do you find that you find that sometimes, you know, people don't listen enough to others' opinions. You are stuck with the framework that they have at work and, and just end up making the wrong decision or not doing the right things?

David Liddle 27:26

I'm nodding, your listeners can't see how vigorously they are nodding, as we're speaking Nadine, it's, it's critical. And again, it's what a lot of the work, we're doing organizational dynamics, and whole systems thinking and positive psychology with organizations, it goes to your point exactly. And one of the challenges that you've set out, and the influences that you've set out in the state you've just made, is that the HR function, human resources function, the custodians of policy and process, again, is an influence that one would draw from the other conclusion, which is that the policy framework is inhibiting business growth. Yeah. And that's a real big challenge to both the Human Resources profession in the Human Resources professional. It's into relationship with leadership and management, and also how organizations can deliver a safe and consistent application of the fair procedure, but do so in a way which is not an inhibitor of creativity and disruptive thinking, because that disruptive thinking is the heart of innovation. And I believe what you've just said, sits at a centre of a radical revolution that's going on, right. It's a Quiet Revolution. There's a revolution going on right now, in the in HR offices up and down the country, as a recognition that we've lent far too far in the direction of over bureaucratizing complexifying our systems, which are inhibiting the ability for managers and leaders to manage and lead and create a space and were very much a TCM, what I'm doing is very much out asking those same questions that you've just been asking of me, to the HR profession, to unions and managers, and helping them to remodel and reshape the way that they deliver a policy process and procedure. So it unlocks rather than inherent ability to take risks and to be innovative while still providing a legally compliant framework as an excellent challenge for HR and leaders to work on.

Nadine Powrie 29:29

Yeah, yeah. You've written, you've published a book, haven't you, called managing conflict, A Practical Guide to resolution in the workplace. What prompted you to write a book because you're very busy? You've got a very successful organization. You're the father of three children. Right. So So what prompted you to add the book to your successful career?

David Liddle 29:54

Yeah, I mean, it's one of the best things I've done. I mean, obviously notwithstanding my three children, and other aspects of my life and I always felt I had a book in me, I'm going, being honest with you, I, I still enjoy writing. And I appreciate that side of thinking, and I remember when I did my Masters, it was when I wasn't an academic child, I'm probably one



of those who were causing more problems than solving them as a youngster. But remember, when I did my masters, I began to enjoy writing and enjoyed learning and studying it was, I was quite surprised how much I enjoyed it. So from that point forward, I started writing a bit more, so I always felt from then I had a book in me. The whole development is kind of building on the conversation we just had around challenged the HR profession to think differently about how they manage conflicts and disputes, and grievances. I felt that I was doing something quite exciting and novel and potentially disruptive to use the phrase. And I wanted to commit that to paper, and I thought it was important to share that and, you know, I was very privileged to have case studies, you know, from Tesco, from the Metropolitan Police from London Ambulance, and big organizations, who were willing to commit their experiences to paper. So it was very much practical guide toolkits and ideas, and just putting it out there and, and helping leaders and HR officials and others do things very slightly differently. The starting point, which is to remove the most dreaded grievance procedure, and I always felt I had a book in me. I enjoyed doing it, and it was hard work. And I made a lot of mistakes in the one I'm working on book number two, now,

Nadine Powrie 31:33

OK, so you want to give us a little preview of book number two?

David Liddle 31:38

Well think about I mean, it's all in that sort of organizational dynamics space, I'm thinking in particular about kind of culture, talk about leadership and talk about management and talking about systems and processes. So it's kind of trying to take the focus of conflict management between two parties, or, you know, within teams, departments and organizations, just thinking a little bit more differently about how organizations might structure themselves. So I'll be looking at different leadership models, big fan of servant leadership, and that participatory style of leadership. So we'll be exploring, exploring issues around culture, just culture, learning culture, stuff from Sidney Dekker, and others, you know, real, real big fan of that, we'll be looking at different leadership models. And, you know, Daniel Goleman, six leadership models and applying those in practice and emotional intelligence, and how we can feed that in as a core competency within our organizations to deliver value. So I think we're well where the book will be. Hopefully, a new and valuable contribution to the body of knowledge is that I'm trying to pull lots of elements together. But always with a focus on that sort of mediation approach. Mediation is so intrinsically powerful that it will always be a thread that runs through the text, but it's mediating not between two parties. Still, it's mediating between whole functions within, within an organization. So yeah, that's, that's, that's a little bit of an insight into what I'm trying to do.

Nadine Powrie 33:03

So how many hours a week do you write on this? On the on this new book?

David Liddle 33:09



Not enough, according to the publishers, Nadine. OK. I need to do a little bit more I need to I mean, we've just, I've newly appointed a new leadership team at TCM, well, they have been building up a leadership team over the last 12 to 18 months. And our new head of HR consultant, he began in post at the beginning of September, he's the latest addition to our leadership team. So now that they're in post, I can delegate quite a lot of the work that I do, leading the business to the leadership team. That's an iterative process. But my hope is that through Q3, the quarter three, that the period we're in now, October, November, December 2020, I'm able to sort of delegate freer myself up, so I'm giving you the sort of same long-winded answer that I give to my publishers,

Nadine Powrie 34:01

David, what does the future look like for mediation in the UK? And you know, more around the world as well?

David Liddle 34:11

It has never been a better time to be a mediator. And goodness me, Nadine, if you look at, I mean, let's park the US for now. I mean, we'll park it because of the complexity but that polarization and the schisms and fissures that are starting to weaken, beginning to vote, which is becoming very clear a. It's a sharp relief within our societies and within Western societies, in particular, a clear and you know, there's a fundamental shift in democratic processes within, certainly within us. Still, you could look at the UK Brexit, austerity COVID. There's so much, you know, the intergenerational challenges that COVID is going to be throwing up in the future, the response to climate change. So as a conflict management professional, I look at our society, and maybe you know, I do see cracks and schisms and fissures forming all over the place. And for me as a mediator, and also a teacher and trainer of mediation, someone who advocates developing integrated mediation systems, with desperately needed we desperately need in our society. These people can bring people together to create space for dialogue to happen. And I genuinely believe there's probably never been a greater need for mediators, and there's perhaps never been a better time to be a mediator. And I call on all our public leaders, and our business leaders and others, to be thinking now and being proactive in looking at ways of creating space for dialogue, to understand that conflict and tensions, they can and become very divisive and very damaging within our society. And we need to find a new way of resolving issues and addressing issues. Brexit seems such a long time ago now with COVID. But you know, there were times in Brexit and the debate here in the UK, that I held my hands in my head. It was woeful in the behaviour of our public servants was at best embarrassing, and at worst was role modelling all of the worst behaviours to our youngsters and society as a whole about how to resolve issues. And at the level of rage and fury, you know, you can see it playing out on a social media is an echo chamber, you can see it play now. I see it in a mediation work; I hear it and watch it. So the future of mediation, it's a shame to say it's probably quite bright because the mediations' future is exceptionally bright as suggesting there is an inherent problem in our society with the mismanagement of conflict. So I don't, I don't know I'm a mediator. So I suppose in some respects, you know, I, I declare an interest, I have an



interest in the furtherance of the mediation profession. But it saddens me to think that we're desperately needed, it worries me that it's still skated over as a nice to have. I do see institutions now using mediation and ADR alternative dispute resolution processes more readily. And I celebrate that every day. But I still think that the shift towards adversarial and ferocious and dogmatic management of issues is still the preferred norm within our society. And I urge, again, our public leaders to speed up the ability by which they engage in a more adult and constructive dialogue-based approach resolving issues.

Nadine Powrie 37:47

I have been running masterclasses on managing difficult conversation and one of my first activities about the cost of a difficult conversation. And it's been amazing to have very, very senior leaders around the table and saying to them, so how much does it cost? To have one and not to have one, and on many occasions, they've been unable to tell me the cost. So I run through an example, saying this is how much it could cost you not to have that conversation, to not go to, mediation not to try to resolve the problem. This is how much he could cost you. And, and, I'm just stunned that people sometimes aren't aware; leaders that can be great people aren't aware of the cost. It doesn't seem that HR has done any analysis of 'what's the risk here'? Because actually, the risk is enormous. It is considerable for people. And it's also enormous financially for the organization. So we've got well being we've got well, the whole thing. So, I mean, sometimes when I present the fact of the risk of not going into mediation of not, resolving conflict with numbers, it seems to help people click and think, ah, OK, let's, let's avoid that. Let's not go down down that road. Do you find that as well that people aren't quite aware of the cost that it could have on the organization and their people?

David Liddle 39:25

I have to be careful what I say here because you know, these are my customers. And I talked earlier about holding my head in my hands. So that might give you a little feel for where I come in terms of the evidence-based decision making about this. And it seems that the good news is it's getting better. There's a body here in the UK that CIPD and they've developed a professional app for the HR profession, which advocates much more evidence-based approach to resolving issues and to human resources, generalist evidence-based outcome-oriented principles. So we're working with the HR professionals to help them to in this case, gather evidence, and I formed a project called the Tapestry project, which brings together consultants and academics and business leaders and policymakers to try and improve the way that we gather and use data to inform decision making. Because ultimately, you know, for, for a course managing difficult conversations, I don't see what you're charging Nadine. But if you're talking about, you know, a few thousand pounds for a bunch of leaders. One day given to a barrister to read through a file could pay for you to for an organization to train 20 managers in how to deal with this stuff. But it still seems to me perverse and very peculiar that organizations would rather spend the money on legal fees or costs of conflict through litigation, and releasing probably one or 2% of their total costs towards integrating alternative dispute resolution systems or training, conversations with others. And it's time for



boards, and senior leaders to for me wake up and smell the conflict. This is happening in your organization's right now. And if you aren't aware of that, and if you're just focused on the P&L and the bottom line, you're not concerned about the human capital and the cost to your people. I think it has a long term detrimental impact both on the reputation, good running the profitability and the competitiveness of the firm. So, come on business leaders, recognize this stuff happens in your organization and understand this stuff is happening and manage it differently. And look at the cost-benefit analysis, as you've just described. So there's Yeah, I see it every day, Nadine, but things are getting better. And people are starting to realize now.

Nadine Powrie 41:45

Yeah, that's good. And my final question to you, it's about your legacy, David. So what gift do you want to have as a mediator?

David Liddle 41:58

OK. I'd love to be recognized as one of the people who caused the abolition of the formal discipline and grievance procedure. You know, if someone said to me, you know, or someone talks about me in the future as being the person, what did he achieve the abolition of the disciplinary and grievance procedures, those pernicious, divisive, damaging, destructive, corrosive, horrendous policy frameworks, which deliver no value, but undermine everything good about being an employee and a colleague. So I'd love to feel in the future, my legacy was that I began a discourse and a dialogue about those horrendous processes. You know, I love being part of the mediation community is an inclusive and very diverse community, I'd like to, to feel I contributed to that through standards and through the development of, you know, articulating the benefits of mediation and have tried to make mediation as accessible. You know, as I say, to my team, we need about every word we utter, needs to have a robust theoretical framework and an understanding of what it means. But what I've tried to do in my career is this, whilst I understand every theoretical model that underpins every single stage and phase of mediation, is cut the jargon, and just make this process as accessible and simple to everyone as possible. So you know, my legacy, I'd love to think that I've made me a bit more accessible. I've been contributed to the growth of mediation, but as I say, the one that I'd be most proud of is that in time, you know, you go into an organization now, and there are no smoking signs up. And you can imagine lighting up a cigarette in a team meeting now will never happen. I'd love to have no grievance and disciplinary procedures, like a big line through as you walk into the office. I'll make the moment very proud.

Nadine Powrie 43:51

David, thank you. Thank you very much for that. If people want to get in touch with you to know more about what you do well too, you know, work with you. How do they go about that?

David Liddle 44:00



Sure. OK, so my I'm on LinkedIn, quite active on LinkedIn. My email address is David.Liddel@tcmgroup.com. You can get hold of me by phone, which is Oh 2070923186. And our website is the tcmgroup.com relatively straightforward. There's lots of information in there and find out more and see what makes us all tick.

Nadine Powrie 44:30

So no excuse not to find you as an expert mediator. You've given us a lot of information. Thank you so much for being my podcast guest today. I've enjoyed speaking with you. And I will put in the show notes, the details of how to contact you and make sure that that sits in there. But David, thank you very much.

David Liddle 44:50

Nadine, thank you. So I've enjoyed the conversation. And thank you very much again for inviting me.

Nadine Powrie 44:56

Thank you.